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# Modern Philology

VOLUME XVIII

January 1921

NUMBER 9

## THE MIDLAND PRESENT PLURAL INDICATIVE ENDING $-e(n)$

On the side of form, the present plural indicative ending  $-e(n)$  is probably the most marked single characteristic of the Midland dialect. It is, accordingly, of sufficient importance to justify an effort both to determine precisely its earliest currency and to consider carefully the problem of its origin.

A precise determination of the occurrence of this termination in the Earliest Middle English material of Midland provenience—the later entries and interpolations in the *Peterborough Chronicle*—has not been made either in Meyer's<sup>1</sup> study of the language of these sections or in the glossary of Plummer's generally admirable edition of the *Chronicles*.<sup>2</sup> The significant forms occur in the specifically Peterborough insertions made by the first scribe, who wrote apparently in 1121, in the contemporaneous entry for 1127, and in the entry for 1137, which was not made before 1154.<sup>3</sup>

In the insertions made in 1121 there are six forms in  $-n$  which both Plummer in his glossary and Meyer consider present plural indicatives.<sup>4</sup> In addition Plummer properly glosses as indicative

<sup>1</sup> H. Meyer, *Zur Sprache der jüngeren Teile der Chronik von Peterborough* (Jena, 1889).

<sup>2</sup> Charles Plummer, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, etc.*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1892, 1899).

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the scribes of this chronicle see Plummer, Vol. II, Introduction, pp. xxxv and xlvii. Concerning the Peterborough insertions in the earlier annals see Plummer, Vol. II, Introduction, p. xlv and n. 1, and Meyer, Vorwort, pp. iv-v.

<sup>4</sup> The forms as they appear in Plummer's text are *liggen*, p. 30, l. 36; *liggan*, p. 31, l. 2; *louien*, p. 32, l. 10; *hauen*, p. 36, l. 6; *lin*, p. 116, ll. 11, 21. The forms given by Meyer are listed on pp. 80, 83-84, 104 of his study.

*geornon*, which Meyer lists as optative, and *be* (with loss of final *n*), which Meyer does not enter at all. The former is under the year 656 (Plummer, p. 33, l. 12), and the latter under the year 675 (Plummer, p. 37, l. 24). Both are in simple relative clauses which do not express any idea of contingency and in which normal syntax clearly requires the indicative. In these entries by the first scribe is a plural *in-ð* (*liggeð*), anno 656, which both Plummer and Meyer enter. In this same annal is a plural *seiþ* (Plummer, p. 33, l. 6), which Plummer glosses correctly but which Meyer does not record—"Swa beo hit, seiþ alle. Amen." Under 675 (Plummer, p. 37, l. 18) is a *liggeð* which Meyer incorrectly enters as plural and which in Plummer's glossary is merely included with others as "pres. sg. & pl." That it is singular is apparent from the text: "Nu gife ic S̃e Peter . . . . þas landes ƿ eal þ þær to liggeð." Both the actual plurals *in-þ*(ð) occur in accounts of grants of land to the monastery of Peterborough, and their archaic form may thus very well have been copied or imitated from earlier genuine or spurious documents.

To make clear the situation in the annal for 1127, the quotation of two brief passages is necessary. The chronicler, in characterizing a disreputable Abbot Henry, compares him to a drone in a hive of bees: "Ðær he wunede eall riht swa drane doð on hiue. Eall þ þa beon dragen toward, swa frett þa drane ƿ dragað fraward." Somewhat later, as preliminary to an account of this abbot's intimacy with fiends, the chronicler asseverates: "Ne þince man na sellice þ we soð seggen, for hit was ful cuð ofer eall land þ," etc. Meyer enters both *dragen* and *seggen* as plural indicatives, *doð* as singular, is doubtful about *dragað*,<sup>1</sup> and does not enter *frett* at all. Plummer, on the contrary, glosses *dragen* and *seggen* as subjunctive, and *doð*, *dragað*, and *frett* (which he considers miswritten for *fretað*) as plurals. There is, however, no syntactic warrant for regarding *dragen* and *seggen* as anything but indicatives. The evidence, too, is that *doð*, *dragað*, and *frett* are singulars. In the first place, the sense demands the singular: in the statement "þær he wunede eall riht swa drane doð on hiue," the abbot would almost certainly be compared to a single drone. If this is true, there is

<sup>1</sup> He lists *dragað* (p. 80) among singular forms, but adds "fraglich, ob. sg., könnte auch als 3 pl. aufgefasst werden, da das Subject dazu (*þa drane*) vielleicht als Plural anzusehen ist."

certainly no occasion for a change to the plural in "swa frett þa drane 7 dragað fraward." Secondly, there is nothing in any of these forms to prevent their being considered singulars. In the interpolated entry for 675 is an unquestioned singular *doð*; a singular in *-að* (*singað*)<sup>1</sup> occurs in the very entry for 1127; and *frett* has very much more the appearance of a syncopated third person singular (other examples of which are noted by Meyer, pp. 80 and 83) than of a miswritten plural *fretað*. Nor need *þa drane* be regarded as a plural form. Several instances of *þa* as singular occur in this same entry for 1127—"ða eorles sunu," "in þa tune," "fram þa selva tune"—and the final *-e* of *drane* does not necessarily denote plurality, as other originally long-stemmed feminine nouns show the extension of this termination to the nominative singular.<sup>2</sup> The evidence is strong that the forms in *-ð* (*t*) are singular and those in *-en* plural indicative.

The annal for 1137 contains two forms in *-en*<sup>3</sup> which both Meyer and Plummer enter as present plural indicatives and no forms in *ð(þ)* which either regards as plurals.

In addition to the clearly indicative forms in *-n* that I have cited from the interpolations by the first scribe, there are several others that Meyer lists doubtfully as optatives and that Plummer glosses as subjunctives.<sup>4</sup> Though it is quite possible to construe them as indicatives—in the same annals there are unmistakably singular indicatives in *-ð* in passages very similar to those containing these plurals in *-n*—yet without the inclusion of forms at all doubtful the evidence is ample as to usage in the Peterborough dialect. One scribe writing in 1121 employed eight present plural indicative forms in *-n* as compared with only two in *-ð(þ)*, and even these two may well have been copied or imitated from earlier originals; a second about 1127 used two forms in *-n* and none in *-ð(þ)*; and a third, writing probably about 1154, also used two plurals in *-n* and none in *-ð(þ)*. It is evident that in this section of Midland, by the middle

<sup>1</sup> "Gif hwa hit doð," Plummer, p. 37, l. 23; "man singað," p. 253, l. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Plummer, p. 29, l. 14—*peode*; p. 37, ll. 26, 29—*witnesse*.

<sup>3</sup> Both are on p. 265 of Plummer's text: *lien*, l. 21, and *willen*, l. 30.

<sup>4</sup> They include three occurrences of *willen* (*wilen*), all in the entry for 656, in Plummer's text, p. 31, ll. 21, 29, 30; *ofbreke* and *healden*, anno 675, p. 31, l. 21; and *tobræcon* and *healdon*, anno 963, p. 117, ll. 16, 17.

of the twelfth century, the newer present plural indicative termination in *-n* had come into currency, and had supplanted the older corresponding ending in *-ð(þ)*.

Though this termination had thus clearly come into currency at the very beginning of the Middle English period, its use cannot, I believe, be traced back into Old English, into Mercian—in general the Old English correspondent to Midland.<sup>1</sup> E. M. Brown, however, in his study of the language of *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> presents apparent evidence to the contrary in several forms which he is inclined to consider “early examples of the ‘extension’ of *-en* to the pres. ind. pl.”<sup>2</sup> Unquestionably the verb forms in *-e(n)*, *-a(n)* cited by Brown would be present plural indicatives in normal syntax; but *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> presents such anomalies in form and syntax that conclusions as to actual usage cannot be properly based upon exceptional forms found in this text. Though the glosser’s general practice indicates clearly that he felt the distinction between indicative and optative, he occasionally employed one for the other.<sup>3</sup> Somewhat frequently he used the plural for the singular, and in at least one instance the preterite for the present.<sup>4</sup> Nor is this confusion confined to mood or tense

<sup>1</sup> The significant Mercian material is scant. The early documents—the earliest glosses and the *Vespasian Psalter*—date so far before any unsettling of the Old English grammatical system that they are serviceless on this point. The chief late Mercian document, from the second half of the tenth century, is the interlinear gloss known as *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup>, which extends through the Gospel of Matthew and into the fifteenth verse of the second chapter of Mark. Though a gloss, it has much the character of continuous discourse. It has a considerable intermixture of Saxon and Northumbrian forms. There is also an interlinear gloss of a few short Latin pieces, the *Royal Glosses*, dating from about the year 1000. Finally, there is a *Life of St. Chad*, a late text, which is preserved only in a twelfth-century copy by a Southern scribe. The copy is apparently a fairly exact reproduction of the original, though it shows some degree of Southern influence. For bibliographical data on these late Mercian documents see K. D. Bülbring, *Altenglisches Elementarbuch*, Teil I, sec. 25 (Heidelberg, 1902), and the references indicated there. For *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> there should be added to these the second part of E. M. Brown’s study *The Language of the Rushworth Gloss*, etc. (Göttingen, 1892); Uno Lindelöf’s *Die Süd-northumbriische Mundart des 10. Jahrhunderts: die Sprache der sog. Glosse Rushworth*<sup>2</sup>, secs. 4–7 (Bonn, 1901); and E. Schulte’s *Untersuchung der Beziehung der ae. Matthäus-glosse im Rushworth Manuscript zu dem lateinischen Text der Handschrift* (Bonn, 1903).

<sup>2</sup> See Brown, *Language*, Part II, pp. 40–44.

<sup>3</sup> For singular present optatives used instead of indicatives, see Skeat’s text, 5:22; 5:29; 5:30; 10:39; 16:25; 18:19; 25:29; 27:43. For indicatives instead of optatives, see 5:25; 5:34; 15:32; 23:15; 24:16, 17, 18; 27:64.

<sup>4</sup> Examples of the plural for the singular are in 2:22; 6:23; 20:2; 23:23; 25:15; the preterite is used for the present in 21:21.

forms; even a cursory examination shows a great number of errors that are purely capricious, without possible relation to grammar, and thus of no consequence in linguistic history.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the errors and anomalies in *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> are probably due to the method employed in composing it. E. Schulte<sup>2</sup> has shown that *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> was not based directly on the Rushworth Latin text, which is of mixed Irish character, but that it had as supplementary original a pure Vulgate text; in some instances it followed the reading of one, in some that of the other, and in some it combined the readings of both. Schulte refutes the possible theory that *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> was merely a translation of a Latin original midway in character between Rushworth and the Vulgate, or that it was the copy of a gloss made from such an original, and he concludes that the glosser, Farman, while glossing Rushworth, must have had before him a second Latin manuscript of pure Vulgate type. The most reasonable explanation of this procedure is that the second manuscript contained an English gloss. Farman's task, then, probably was not so much translation as adaptation of this Old English gloss of a Vulgate text to his mixed Irish Rushworth text, the two differing in innumerable details. Schulte also suggests that this presumptive Old English gloss of the

<sup>1</sup> I list some representative instances. Frequently an *-n-* is inserted, as in 4:25, *fylgedun* for *fylgedun* ("secutae sunt"); 6:13 *constungae* for *costungae*. In 8:12 an inserted *-n-* changes the form of a participle *aworpene* into that of the gerundive, and similarly in 20:24, 21:15, 24:49, 27:38, 44. Impossible syntactic combinations are numerous: in 1:17, "Omnes igitur generationes ab abraham usque ad dauid sunt xliii" becomes "Ealra cuplice kneorissum from abraha me op to dauide feowertene kneorisse sint"; 4:6, "in omnibus uis tuis"—"in allum weogas pine"; 10:1, "dedit eis potestatem spirituum immundorum"—"salde heom mæhtae gastas unclenra"; 25:37, "Tunc respondebunt ei iusti"—"Donne 7 swærigaþ him þæm soþfæste." In at least one instance a Latin word, instead of being translated, is incorporated into the English gloss: 24:49, "et coepit percuterit [sic for *percutere*] conseruos suos et manducat et bibet cum ebris"—"onginnaþ slan efnþeu his manducat him þonne 7 drinceþ mid druncennum." At times error results apparently from a subconscious imitation of a Latin form, as in the pronouns of the following passages: 5:16, "glorificent patrem uestrum"—"wuldrigæ fæder eowrum"; 8:21, "permitte me . . . sepelire patrem meum"—"læt me . . . bebyrgen fæder minum." Sometimes one form is used for another quite different in function, as *ophe* for *op* in 1:17, where *usque* *ad* is twice rendered *ophe to*, and similarly in 18:21. Finally, the glosser regularly misinterprets the Latin adjective *nequam*, with the result that the passage in which it occurs is rendered into unintelligible nonsense, as in 6:23, "Si autem oculus tuus nequam est totum corpus tuum tenebrosum erit"—"Gif þin ege ne bið nan eall þin lichoma beoþ deostru." In 13:38 *nequam* is rendered by *nænegu* and in 20:15 by *nawiht*. The errors listed here are of course merely representative and form but a very small proportion of the whole number to be found in *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 9-23.

Vulgate was in a Saxon dialect, and he thus provides the most satisfactory explanation of the presence of Saxon forms in *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup>.

Exceptional forms in a gloss like *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup>, composite in structure and abounding in capricious errors and impossible syntactic combinations, provide no basis on which to found conclusions as to actual usage. The occasional occurrence in this text of forms in *-e(n)*, *-a(n)* where normal syntax requires the present plural indicative, accordingly, cannot be regarded as evidence that the later distinctive Midland termination had already come into use at the time this gloss was composed. The significant material in the other late Mercian texts is very scant, but what there is points clearly to the persistence of the earlier termination in *-þ(ð)*. In the *Royal Glosses* are only four instances of the present plural indicative—one an uncompleted *forgef* and the other three ending in *ð(þ)*. In the *Life of St. Chad* are eight present plural indicatives in *-ð(þ)*, in addition to a single *beoð*, and there is none in *-en*. Trustworthy evidence is thus lacking for the use of the ending in question in Mercian texts of the Old English period; the earliest certain instances are those in the *Peterborough Chronicle*.

The accepted explanations of the origin of this characteristic Midland ending are that it was transferred into the present indicative plural from the present optative plural,<sup>2</sup> or that it made its way into the present plural indicative through the analogy of the plural forms of the present optative and the preterite indicative and optative.<sup>3</sup> These explanations have been generally accepted, apparently not because investigation has shown them to be well grounded, but because no other source of this termination has suggested itself.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 30. On pp. 18-19 Schulte cites a number of striking examples of conflation in which the readings of both the Vulgate and the *Rushworth* Latin texts are combined; one of these is the second half of 5:44, in which *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> apparently equates an indicative with an optative—*hateþ f fleȝæ*. The reading of 25:41 illustrates the queer results of a careless conflation. The *Rushworth* Latin text reads: "in ignem æternum quem praeparauit pater meus diabulo"; the *Lindisfarne* Latin text, which is a Vulgate text resembling *Farman's* second original, reads: "in ignem æternum qui praeparatus est diabolo"; *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> through a combination of these reads: "in ece fyr þte was ȝelærwad fæder min deofle."

<sup>2</sup> Thus, for example, E. Mätzner, *Englische Grammatik* (Berlin, 1860), Part I, p. 324; M. Kaluza, *Historische Grammatik der englischen Sprache*<sup>2</sup> (Berlin, 1906, 1907), Part II, p. 169; H. C. Wyld, *A Short History of English* (New York, 1915), p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Thus L. Morsbach, *Ueber den Ursprung der neuenglischen Schriftsprache* (Heilbronn, 1888), p. 134; H. Sweet, *A New English Grammar* (Oxford, 1900), Part I, p. 378; W. Zenke, *Synthesis und Analysis des Verbums im Orrmulum* (Halle, 1910), p. 32.

As more likely sources of this present plural indicative ending in *-n*, I wish to suggest the present plural indicative ending in *-n* belonging earlier to the preterite-present verbs and to such forms of the substantive verb as *sinðon*, *earon*, and *biþon*. In support of this suggestion I shall present the results of an examination of various Old and Middle English texts.

As preliminary to a particular examination of the problem, it will be serviceable, I think, to define the conditions under which analogical leveling of originally distinct terminations may take place. Such leveling occurs only where there are very close points of contact, either (a) formal or (b) functional.

Formal contact, or analogy in form, which may result in a leveling of originally distinct terminations, exists wherever grammatical forms belonging to different categories are identical at certain points, so that the user, unconsciously extending the likeness, makes these forms identical at other points and thus levels out earlier distinctions. This kind of analogy has been actively operative in all periods of English. It produced, for example, the confusion in late West Saxon between such weak verbs of class I as *nerian* and weak verbs of class II—*bodian*, *lufian*, etc.;<sup>1</sup> in Middle English it was responsible for the extension of final *-e* to the nominative singular of originally long-stemmed feminine nouns, such as *lōre* (OE *lār*); and it is responsible for such a current neologism as the preterite *dove* from the infinitive *dive*. Examples might be multiplied.

Clearly there were no sufficient points of contact in form between the present indicative with singular endings (1) *u*, *o*, *e*, (2) *es(t)*, *as(t)*, (3) *eþ*, *aþ*, plural *aþ*, *iaþ*, and any of the various mood and tense forms (present optative, preterite indicative and optative, present indicative of preterite-presents or the substantive verb) which had *-on*, *-un*, *-an*, *-en*, etc., as plural termination. From whatever source the Midland present plural indicative ending came, the contact which resulted in the leveling out of the earlier *-þ* in favor of *-n* could not have been in form; it must have been in function.

Functional contact, or analogy in function, may obliterate original differences in termination through the operation of the natural tendency to express like relations in like manner. It brought

<sup>1</sup> Sievers, *AgS. Grammatik*<sup>3</sup> (Halle, 1898), sec. 400, Anm. 3.



about, for example, the supplantation of the various endings of the nominative-accusative plural of nouns which were employed in Old English by the *-s* ending which belonged earlier only to a single important class of masculines. It is largely responsible for the current tendency to obliterate the somewhat nice distinction between *shall* and *will* as auxiliaries of the future and to employ only *will*. This kind of analogy has been effective in all periods of the language.

The particular problem of this study is, then, to determine whether contact in function which would promote analogical leveling was closest (a) between the plural of the present indicative and of the present optative, or (b) between the present indicative and the present optative, plus the preterite indicative and optative, or (c) between the present plural indicative of normal verbs and the present plural indicative of preterite-present verbs and the verb "to be." A priori consideration obviously points to the contact indicated in (c) as the closest and the most likely to bring about analogical leveling. The evidence, I think, supports this a priori presumption.

I shall consider first the likelihood of leveling into the present indicative from the present optative. Every student of Old English realizes that the distinction in use between the indicative and the optative was not always clearly and sharply drawn. Although generally the use of one mood or the other at any stage of the language was in accord with fairly well-defined principles, so that one is sure that a writer felt the distinction between the two moods, yet in particular instances there appears to have been considerable confusion.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence of this lack of a sharply defined boundary

<sup>1</sup> For example, Matt. 2:13 in the Corpus MS of the West Saxon Gospels reads: "Toward ys þ herodes secð þ cild to forspillenne," and the reading of the Hatton MS is similar; in Luke 9:44, however, both Corpus and Hatton have the optative in very much the same kind of expression, the reading of Corpus being: "Hit is toward þ mannes sunu si geseald on manna handa." In this latter passage, both the *Rushworth* and the *Lindisfarne Glosses* have the indicative *bið* instead of the optative *si*. Even more striking an inconsistency appears in Luke 10:22, in which Corpus and Hatton employ both the indicative and the optative in exactly similar juxtaposed passages. Corpus has: "Nan man nat hwylc is se sunu buton se fæder ne hwylc si ðe fæder buton se sunu." The leaf containing this passage is lost from *Rushworth*, but *Lindisfarne* has the indicative in both instances. The Latin text of course has the subjunctive. Many similar instances might be gleaned *passim* from A. N. Henshaw's *The Syntax of the Indicative and Subjunctive Moods in the Anglo-Saxon Gospels* (Leipzig, 1894). Inconsistencies in Alfredian

between the syntax of the indicative and of the optative in some constructions, or coexistent with this lack, there was a tendency to transfer to the indicative or to express by the use of the so-called auxiliary verbs some functions once expressed by the optative.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the dialects in the later period of Old English there was some uncertainty on the part of users of the language as to whether to employ the indicative or the optative in certain constructions. To some extent, accordingly, there was a partial confusion in the use of the two moods; that is, there was some degree of close contact in function.

But several facts militate strongly against the assumption that, as a result of this functional contact between the two moods, the ending of the present plural indicative was replaced by that of the present optative. First, even in texts where apparent confusion of the two moods exists, so that occasionally an indicative appears instead of the normal optative, or vice versa, it is quite clear that the writer felt the distinction between the two, that they were not so confused as to be used interchangeably. Though in Alfred's prose there are a number of inconsistencies in mood,<sup>2</sup> yet no one would contend that in these writings the syntactic distinction between optative and indicative had so far broken down as to favor a breakdown in the formal distinction and thus make possible the displacement of the endings of one mood by those of the other. And the situation in later texts is similar: despite occasional encroachments of one mood

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prose are cited in J. E. Wülfing's *Die Syntax in den Werken Alfreds des Grossen* (Bonn, 1901), Part II, pp. 63-176. The same sort of inconsistency appears in the later entries of the *Peterborough Chronicle*. For example, the formula concluding the entry for 1085 reads: "Gebete hit God elmihtiga þonne his willa sy"; that at the end of the first section for 1131 is: "God hit bete þa his wille bep." Instances might be presented, of course, from other Middle English texts—as also from Modern English.

<sup>1</sup> An illustration of the former is the gradual supplantation of the optative by the indicative in indirect discourse. See J. H. Gorrell, "Indirect Discourse in Anglo-Saxon," in *PMLA*, X (1895), 342-485. On p. 483 Gorrell declares: "The subjunctive of reported statements after simple verbs of saying is the rule in early Anglo-Saxon, but chronologically considered, the use of the subjunctive and of the indicative after such expressions vary [*sic*] inversely. . . . In the later post-Alfredian period, the great leveling of moods under the indicative tended to limit the use of the subjunctive after verbs of saying to expressions of possibility, contingency, condition, etc." A not wholly satisfactory presentation of the growth of the use of auxiliaries to supplant the optative may be found *passim* in Gerald Hotz's *On the Use of the Subjunctive Mood in Anglo-Saxon and Its Further History in Old English* (Zurich, 1882).

<sup>2</sup> See Wülfing, *op. cit.*, especially p. 147.

upon what was, or had been, the field of the other, the distinction between the two was unquestionably felt. Second, in Middle English texts of all dialects the distinction between present indicative and present optative is clearly preserved. Even in the East Midland dialect, where the present indicative plural had adopted the ending *-e(n)* and accordingly had come to have the same form as the present optative plural, the distinction in form was preserved in the singular.<sup>1</sup> It is hardly possible to conceive of any confusion of function that affected only the plural form and left the singular untouched. In the Northern and the Southern dialects the syntactic difference between indicative and optative continued to be marked, in the plural as well as in the singular, by distinct terminations. Finally, as is well known, what tendency there has been in English toward leveling out the distinction between optative and indicative has at all times been generally toward supplanting the former by the latter.<sup>2</sup> It is of course possible that a single instance should contravene a general tendency, but unless such a contravention of normal development is shown to have been especially favored by circumstances it can hardly be assumed as probable. It appears to me, then, that although there was some degree of functional contact between indicative and optative, yet the evidence discredits the theory that as a result of this contact alone the present plural indicative ending in *-þ* actually was displaced by that of the optative in *-n*. The contact between the moods may have been a factor in the development of this *-n* ending in the indicative, but it can hardly have been the chief cause.

The theory that the ending in question was extended from the present optative, plus the preterite indicative and optative, is supported by whatever argument there is for extension from the present optative alone and, in addition, by a plausible assumption. After the lightly stressed vowels of the personal endings had weakened in character and had thus become indistinguishable in speech, the plural endings of the present optative, the preterite indicative, and the

<sup>1</sup> In the very earliest Midland material, that in the *Peterborough Chronicle*, the present optative singular ending *-e* is kept altogether distinct from the indicative endings *-est*, *-eþ* (*aþ*, *oþ*). See the forms cited by Meyer, pp. 79-84, 99, 103-5.

<sup>2</sup> The one important exception to this general tendency is in the use of the optative instead of the indicative in the protasis of a simple condition. See Hotz, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 ff.

preterite optative all fell together. The assumption is that when these three plural forms of the verb came to be indicated indistinguishably by *-n* preceded by a colorless vowel, this *-n* termination became felt as the generic plural sign and displaced the earlier present plural indicative ending in *-þ*. Such a displacement is much like that whereby in other instances originally distinct terminations have later been leveled out—for example, in nouns the supplantation of various nominative-accusative plural endings by that in *-s*, which belonged earlier only to masculine *a*-stems. This theory of the introduction of the *-n* ending into the present plural indicative, supported as it is by the analogy of similar levelings, appears very plausible, and on a priori consideration seems an adequate and satisfactory explanation. But it is merely an assumption for which there is no direct evidence; there is no actual interchange in Old English texts of *-aþ*, *-on*, *-en* which would prove the existence of a linguistic feeling for a common plural termination in these different moods and tenses.

My own belief, as already stated, is that this present plural indicative ending traces back much more directly to the present plural indicative ending of preterite-present verbs and of certain forms of the verb “to be” (*earon*, *sindon*, *biþon*) than it does to the sources hitherto suggested. I shall consider first the preterite-present verbs.

It is obvious, I think, that a closer functional contact existed between the present indicative of normal verbs and the same mood and tense of preterite-present verbs than between present indicative and present optative of normal verbs, or than between present indicative and a combination of present optative and preterite indicative and optative. Many of the preterite-present verbs which were most frequently used and which were therefore most apt starting points for analogical levelings were used, not primarily as auxiliaries, but exactly as normal verbs. It is almost inconceivable that *witan* (“know”), *cunnan* (“know, be acquainted with”), *agan* (“possess”), *unnan* (“grant”), *munan* (“remember”) should have been kept strongly distinguished in form from normal verbs whose function was identical with their own. From this functional identity, a confusion in form and a later leveling were most likely.

Evidence of the confusion in form from which a later leveling may be assumed appears in a number of Old English texts in various dialects. In West Saxon, where the conservative influence of a cultivated and literary *Schriftsprache* was strongest, this confusion was least apparent, yet its occurrence in this dialect is clear. Sievers notes in late West Saxon for the preterite-present *gemunan* a complete set of present indicative forms taken over from the normal verb.<sup>1</sup> In Ælfric's rendering of some of the Old Testament the preterite-present *āgan* also has forms belonging properly to the normal verb.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly a search of other late West Saxon texts would show a number of similar forms in other preterite-present verbs. In the Mercian and Northumbrian dialects, where the language was less protected from natural tendencies, the evidences of confusion are much more impressive. In *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> *cunnan* in the present plural indicative ends five times in *-un*, *-an*, and three times in *-þ*; and the only present indicative singular of *gemunan* is *gemynest*, with the ending of a normal verb. In the *Lindisfarne Gloss to the Gospels*,<sup>4</sup> out of a total of fifty-five present indicative plurals of *wuta* there are ten forms with the ending *-s* or *-ð*; *cunna* in six occurrences has one form in *-s*; the only present indicative plurals of *ðorfa* are two forms in *-ð*,<sup>5</sup> and the only singular has also adopted the ending *-ð* from normal verbs; and *mona* in the only occurrences has one singular and one plural in *-s*. In *Rushworth*<sup>2</sup>, the Northumbrian portion of the *Rushworth Gloss to the Gospels*,<sup>6</sup> *wuta* has six forms in *-s* or *-ð* out of a total of forty-four present plural indicatives, and *gemuna*, in its only occurrences in the present indicative, has one singular in *-ð* and one plural in *-s*.

The same sort of contamination appears in Middle English texts of the South, as the following examples from early documents show. The *Poema Morale* in the Jesus MS has *schulleþ* in lines 103 and 264;

<sup>1</sup> *Ags. Gram.*, ed. 3, sec. 423, 9, Anm. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 4:22, *ge agað*; 5:33, a first person singular present indicative *age*. See C. Brühl, *Die Flexion des Verbums in Ælfrics Heptateuch und Buch Hiob* (Marburg, 1892), pp. 90-92.

<sup>3</sup> See Brown, Part II, sec. 52.

<sup>4</sup> See Theodor Kolbe, "Die Konjugation der Lindisfarner Evangelien," *Bonner Studien zur englischen Philologie* (Bonn, 1912), V, 95 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Except one *ðurfu we*, as to which see Sievers, *Ags. Gram.*, sec. 360, 2, Anm. 3.

<sup>6</sup> See Lindelöf's *Die Südnorthumbrische Mundart*, pp. 149 ff.

versions E and *e* in the Egerton MS have *witeþ* in line 290, and E also has *sculled* in line 284.<sup>1</sup> The A-version of Laȝamon's *Brut* has a second person singular *ageſt*, a plural *agæð*, and a large number of plurals in *-eð(ed)* of Old English *sculan*. The B-version has a second person singular *canest*, a plural *witeþ*, several plurals *ogeþ*, *oweþ*, and five plurals in *-eþ* of Old English *sculan*.<sup>2</sup> In *The Owl and the Nightingale* both manuscripts have *witeſt* as well as *woteſt*, and the Jesus MS has a plural *nuteþ* of this verb and two instances of the plural *ſchulleþ*.<sup>3</sup> A later text, the so-called *Robert of Gloucester's Chronicle*, has a plural *moweþ*, eight plurals *ssoleþ* (*ſſulleþ*), and six *witeþ* (*nuteþ*, *nyteþ*).<sup>4</sup> Examples of preterite-present verbs with the endings of normal verbs might be multiplied from Southern Middle English documents.

The forms cited above from Old and Middle English documents show the transfer of endings from normal verbs to preterite-present verbs; that is, they clearly show a tendency to level out the personal endings of one class in favor of the other. In the forms cited, the tendency was toward supplanting the endings of preterite-present by those of normal verbs; in earlier stages of Old English, however, in all dialects as well as in other Germanic dialects, at one point the ending of the preterite-presents largely displaced that of normal verbs—in the second person singular present indicative, where *-ſt* supplanted *-s*. Though the addition of *-t* here was probably due in part to enclisis of the pronoun subject, there is no question as to the determining influence of the analogy of the preterite-presents.<sup>5</sup>

It is clear, then, that the relationship between preterite-presents and normal verbs was extremely close—so close that personal endings belonging properly to one class actually, in particular instances,

<sup>1</sup> For bibliographical data see Zupitza-Schipper, *Alt- und mittellenglisches Übungsbuch*<sup>11</sup> (Vienna and Leipzig, 1915), p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> See Max Böhnke, *Die Flexion des Verbums in Laȝamons Brut* (Berlin, 1906), pp. 74 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See J. E. Wells, "Accidence in 'The Owl and the Nightingale'," *Anglia*, XXXIII, 268-69.

<sup>4</sup> See F. Pabst, "Flexionsverhältnisse bei Robert von Gloucester," *Anglia*, XIII, 236-38.

<sup>5</sup> See Sievers, *Ag. Gram.*, ed. 3, sec. 356, and Anm. 1, for the situation in Old English. For the process of displacement see Joseph and Mary Elizabeth Wright, *Old English Grammar* (Oxford, 1908), p. 240; W. Braune, *Althochdeutsche Grammatik* (Halle, 1911), 3d and 4th eds., sec. 306. b, Anm. 5; and F. Kluge, *Vorgeschichte der allgermanischen Dialekte* (Strassburg, 1913), 3d ed., p. 163.

were transferred to the other. This leveling, too, was not always in favor of the endings proper to the more numerous normal verbs; actually, in the second person singular of the present indicative in all dialects, a preterite-present ending to a very considerable extent displaced the ending of normal verbs. Exactly similar to this latter development would be the displacement of the normal present plural indicative ending in *-þ* by that of the preterite-present in *-n*.

The present plural ending of the preterite-presents also exerted a strong leveling influence upon the form of the substantive verb. The present plural *sindon -un* (originally of the third person only), which appears not only in all dialects of Old English but in Old High German and Old Saxon as well, owes its added *-on, -un* to the analogy of the preterite-present verbs.<sup>1</sup> In the Anglian dialects, Mercian and Northumbrian, this ending extended its scope very greatly. In the *Vespasian Psalter* and *Hymns*, Mercian texts from the first half of the ninth century, *sind (sin)* occurs 133 times as against a total of 24 forms in *-un, -on* (18 *sindun -on, 6 earun*).<sup>2</sup> In *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup>, a predominantly Mercian text about a hundred years later, the proportion of forms with the extended ending is reversed as compared with the earlier text: *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> has 59 *sindun -on* and only 6 *sint*, and it also has a single *arun*. Further, in *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> this ending has been extended from the stem *\*es*, to which it was first attached, and has made its way into the stem *\*bheu*: by the side of 26 *beoþ (bioþ)* are 7 *beoþan* and 1 *biðon*.<sup>3</sup> The other late Mercian material has altogether only three occurrences of "to be"—in the *Life of St. Chad* one *beoð* (l. 223) and one *earun* (l. 244), in the *Royal Glosses* a single *sind*. These single instances constitute very little evidence of any value. Northumbrian texts of approximately the same date as *Rushworth*<sup>1</sup> <sup>4</sup> show a similar extension of the *-n* ending. In the gloss to the *Durham Ritual*,

<sup>1</sup> Wright's *Old English Grammar*, p. 277, is misleadingly brief in presenting "*sindon -un* with the ending of the pret. pl. added on." O. Behagel, *Geschichte der deutschen Sprache*<sup>3</sup> (Strassburg, 1911), p. 276, states more exactly: "Für die 3. Pers. Pl. bestand die Nebenform *sindun*, in Angleichung an die Präterito-Präsentia, die 1. u. 2. Pers. Pl. schon nahe standen." See also W. Wilmans, *Deutsche Grammatik* (Strassburg, 1906), 3te Abt., 1. Hälfte, sec. 28, 3; and W. Streitberg, *Urgermanische Grammatik* (Heidelberg, 1896), p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> The occurrences are listed in C. Grimm's "Glossar zum Vespasian-Psalter und den Hymnen," *Anglistische Forschungen* (Heidelberg, 1906), XVIII, 55.

<sup>3</sup> See Brown, *op. cit.*, Part II, pp. 68-69.

<sup>4</sup> See Bülbring, *Ae. Elementarbuch*, secs. 24-25.

*sind* (*sint*) occurs only 5 times to 21 *sindon*, and there are also 7 *aro* (*n*). To the stem *\*bheu* there are 29 *biðo*(*n*) and not a single plural with the normal, unextended ending in *-þ(ð)*.<sup>1</sup> In the *Lindisfarne Gloss to the Gospels*, the proportion of *sind* to *sindon* forms is much higher than in any other late Anglian text, the numbers being 29 *sindon* to 168 *sind*. But this text shows 94 *aron*(*aru*), and a complete displacement of the normal present plural indicative of the stem *\*bheu* by a form with the ending *-on* that traces back ultimately to preterite-present verbs. The figures are 200 *biðon* (*biðo*, *bioðon*), 2 *biað*, 2 *bið(ð)*. In all probability the two *bið(ð)* are properly singular forms; the two *biað* show extension of the ending of normal verbs into the substantive verb, as does a singular *bieð*. This text also has a second person singular *arst*, through the analogy of the preterite-presents.<sup>2</sup> In *Rushworth*<sup>2</sup>, *sindon* again greatly outnumbers *sint*, the figures being 77 *sindon* to 28 *sint*. There are also 35 *aron* (*arun*). In this text, too, the normal plural of *\*bheu* has been completely displaced by forms with added *-on*, *-un*; there are 85 *bioðon* (*un*, *o*) and only 3 *biað*<sup>3</sup> and these three *biað* are due to the analogy of normal verbs, as in *Lindisfarne* above. Thus, by the end of the tenth century, in both the Anglian dialects the various stems of the verb "to be" generally had come to have the present plural indicative end in *-on*, *-un*, an ending derived ultimately or immediately from the preterite-present group of verbs.

The situation existing in these dialects, as shown in the preceding paragraphs, was most favorable to the further extension of this *-n* ending into the present plural indicative of normal verbs. In the first place, this ending had so far extended its use from the preterite-presents into the substantive verb as to be characteristic of both these important verb classes. Verb forms of these classes were in most frequent and general use, and had close functional contact with normal verbs; on both accounts, therefore, they were apt starting-points for an analogical leveling. Either the group of preterite-presents alone or the substantive verb alone could exert a strong influence upon the form of other verbs; the analogy of both in combination

<sup>1</sup> See Uno Lindelöf, "Wörterbuch zur Interlinearglosse des *Rituale Ecclesiae Dunelmensis*," *Bonner Beiträge* (Bonn, 1901), IX, 231, under *vosa*.

<sup>2</sup> See Kolbe's *Konjugation*, pp. 100-102.

<sup>3</sup> See Lindelöf, *Südnorthumbrische Mundart*, p. 150.



multiplied this influence. In the second place, this *-n* ending was showing very great vigor—it had developed in use far beyond its original scope and was apparently in the active stage of further extension. Under these circumstances, if there were no powerful contrary tendencies, the displacement of the plural in *-þ*, which belonged to normal verbs, by that in *-n*, which was common to both the substantive verb and the preterite-presents, was a natural step, in full accord with usual linguistic process. In Mercian (Midland), so far as I have observed, there were no strong opposing tendencies; on the contrary, the displacement was favored by whatever functional contact there was between present indicative and present optative, and by whatever tendency may have existed toward the development of a general plural termination through the extension of the ending *-n* from the present optative and the preterite indicative and optative into the present indicative.<sup>1</sup>

In Northumbrian (Northern), however, a similar extension of *-n* into the present plural indicative did encounter a very strong opposing tendency—that toward the generalization of *-s* as the ending of all persons of the present indicative, plural as well as singular. In the *Durham Ritual*<sup>2</sup> the earlier endings in *-þ* were still more numerous in the third person singular and in the plural than were endings in *-s*. In *Rushworth*<sup>3</sup> and *Lindisfarne*,<sup>3</sup> though *-þ* was used more often in the third person singular, *-s* was considerably more frequent in the plural. In all three of these texts *-þ* appeared occasionally in the second person singular, but in none of them had *-s* or *-þ* made its way into the first person singular. So vigorous, however, was this *-s* termination that in Middle English texts of the Northern dialect it had supplanted all other personal endings of the present indicative (except when the verb was in immediate contact with a personal pronoun subject), and thus had become the characteristic present indicative ending in both numbers and all persons. It had even established itself in the stem *\*bheu*, both singular and plural. The extraordinary vigor of this ending forestalled the extension of the *-n* termination in the Northern dialect.

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 464–67.

<sup>2</sup> See Uno Lindelöf, *Die Sprache des Rituals von Durham* (Helsingfors, 1890), pp. 72 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See Lindelöf, *Südnorthumbrische Mundart*, pp. 128 ff., and Kolbe, *Konjugation*, pp. 107 ff.

In the Southern dialect the present plural indicative ending in *-þ* remained in normal verbs throughout the Middle English period. The retention of this ending in Southern, as contrasted with its displacement in Northern and Midland, is to be explained in great part, I think, by the power of the analogy of the substantive verb. In late West Saxon texts the ending *-on*, *-un* was not extended to the substantive verb so greatly as it was in Mercian and Northumbrian: *earon* was not used in the South; *sind* appears to have been fully as common as *sindon*,<sup>1</sup> and *-on*, *-un* was never attached to *\*bheu*, the present plural of this stem remaining *beoþ*. The form *beoþ* had much greater vitality than *sind (on)*, and during the transition period completely displaced the latter, which disappeared from Southern texts.<sup>2</sup> The analogy of this plural *beoþ* must have operated powerfully to strengthen and preserve the plural in *-þ* of normal verbs.<sup>3</sup> The situation was precisely the reverse of that in the Midland dialect, where through the extension of the *-n* termination to the substantive verb the influence of the preterite-presents toward the analogical displacement of *-þ* by *-n* was enormously reinforced.

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<sup>1</sup> The distribution of *sind* and *sindon* in late West Saxon texts is peculiar. In the *Blickling Homilies* (ed. R. Morris, E.E.T.S., Nos. 58, 63, 73), *syndon* and *synt* occur with approximately equal frequency. In the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (ed. W. H. Hulme, *PMLA*, XIII, 457 ff.), the Cotton MS has only *syndon*, and the single *synd* of the Cambridge MS is probably a scribal error. In the *West Saxon Gospels* (ed. J. W. Bright, Boston, 1904, 1905, 1906) I have gone over the first eight chapters of Matthew, Mark, and John, and found in Matthew 21 *synt (synd)*, in Mark 25, and in John 22; I found no *syndon* in these chapters.

<sup>2</sup> See Karl Jost, "Beon und Wesan; eine syntaktische Untersuchung," *Anglistische Forschungen* (Heidelberg, 1909), XXVI, 110 ff. Jost shows, for example, that in a copy of one of Ælfric's homilies, the frequently occurring *sind (on)* of the original has been replaced in every instance by *beoþ*. In the A-version of *Lazamon's Brut*, by the side of usual *beoþ* are some instances of *sunden*; in the B-version, in all the nine instances where the text corresponds with that of A, *sunden* has been given up in favor of *beoþ*.

<sup>3</sup> One may, of course, assume—contrary to the opinion expressed above—that *sind (on)* was given up and *beoþ* preserved through the influence of normal verbs with present plural ending in *-þ*. This assumption seems to me altogether unlikely. If *sind (on)* had been in vigorous current use, the analogy of normal verbs would have operated not to displace *sind (on)* entirely, but to attach to it the plural ending of normal verbs (*ap*, *ep*), as was actually the case in *Lazamon* A22153 and 24766 (*sundeþ*), and 27319 (*seondeþ*). The fact that *sind (on)* wholly disappeared from Southern texts even of the early Middle English period shows very positively, I think, that it had previously fallen out of use, so that in the South only *beoþ* remained in currency.